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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 26, 2005

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SECRETARY APPLAUDS GOVERNOR'S SWIFT ACTION TO BLOCK VIAGRA FOR CONVICTED SEX OFFENDERS

SACRAMENTO – Health and Human Services Agency Secretary Kimberly Belshé today released the following statement after Governor Schwarzenegger issued a directive to immediately halt Medi-Cal coverage of all erectile dysfunction drugs to known sex offenders.

“The Governor’s decisive action today closes loopholes that previously permitted taxpayer-subsidized Viagra for sex offenders. As requested by the Governor, I instructed the California Department of Health Services to immediately alert Medi-Cal providers that it is an abuse of the Medi-Cal program and improper to prescribe Viagra and similar drugs to known sex offenders.

“I urge the Legislature to support the Governor’s efforts to enact legislation providing state agencies with needed authority and information to protect the safety of Californians.”

The following information outlines the state’s responsibility to cover prescription drugs for Medi-Cal beneficiaries.

- For years, states and the National Governors Association opposed the requirement that Medicaid cover Viagra. However, the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) is required by federal law to cover drugs deemed medically necessary for Medi-Cal patients.
- The federal government this week issued new rules that allow California to deny Viagra and similar drugs to known sex offenders.
- Prior to this federal directive, strict controls were in place to ensure that the drug was only dispensed to Medi-Cal patients with a physician’s authorization that it was medically necessary.
- CDHS reviewed the medical authorization before approving payment for Viagra for Medi-Cal patients. Additionally, CDHS limited the number of pills covered.

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